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2007 Farm Bill Listening Forum

Richland Community College Auditorium

My name is Bill Teichmiller and I'm representing E.J. Water Corporation, which is a non-for-profit, member owned, rural water cooperative serving a 2,000 square mile area in south central Illinois having over 6,500 members. We currently serve 4,650 retail connections and wholesale water to 7 towns and construction just started 12 years ago!

There are 3 key points I'd like to raise:

1. The Rural Development staff has been a tremendous partner in helping us get our dream of providing safe and reliable drinking water off the ground. I publicly want to commend all the help RD has given our cooperative and thank them on behalf of our members.
2. Program funding for Illinois has dropped in the last 3 - 4 years from approximately \$19M and has spiraled downward to a low this year of just \$5.7M. We must restore funding levels from a few years ago to match the ongoing project backlog. The funding technique used should also be changed to a revolving loan concept so money going to these projects would be paid by the principal and interest collected by all RD borrowers. The appropriation of program money and then collecting payments and classifying them as revenue to the Treasury is very misleading and thus creates the temptation of cutting appropriation money to balance out other priorities which has been the case lately.
3. As many of you already know, we have universal telephone access and the Rural Electrification Act of 1938, which has brought phone and electricity to all rural homes and businesses. However, we still have many people hauling drinking water to their farms, homes, and businesses in Illinois. While we've made great strides in the last several years, we still have much more to do. Our cooperative still has over 1,000 members who do not have safe drinking water so the task in front of us still remains clear. We need a direct and purposeful REA of 1938 type act in 2007 clearing the way for serious funding to tackle large-scale rural regionalization of water in small towns and rural areas.

Thank you for your time and we appreciate what the Department of Agriculture does for Rural America!!

Bill Teichmiller, General Manager/CEO

United States
Department of
Agriculture

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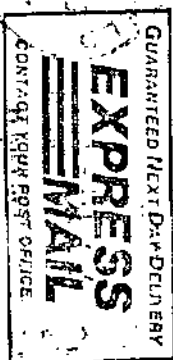
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